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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
10/705,780	11/10/2003	Satoshi Mizutani	20050/0200474-US0	4388

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EXAMINER

STEPHENS, JACQUELINE F

ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
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3761

DATE MAILED: 04/24/2006

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary

Application No.

10/705,780

Applicant(s)

MIZUTANI ET AL.

Examiner

Jacqueline F. Stephens

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-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If the period for reply specified above is less than thirty (30) days, a reply within the statutory minimum of thirty (30) days will be considered timely.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 27 January 2006.
- 2a) ☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-4 and 6-16 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1-4 and 6-16 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
- ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 - ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
 - ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- ☐ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
- ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948).
- ☐ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____.
- ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____.
- ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
- ☐ Other: _____.

DETAILED ACTION

Response to Arguments

1. Applicant's arguments filed 1/27/06 have been fully considered but they are not persuasive. Applicant argues Johnson does not disclose first and second absorbent bodies enclosed in bonded surface side and back side sheets. However, the claim does not require the absorbent bodies are separate. Therefore, as broadly as claimed Figure 2 of Johnson shows first absorbent body forming the protruded area 3 and second absorbent body forming the flat area 10.

In response to applicant's argument that the references fail to show certain features of applicant's invention, it is noted that the features upon which applicant relies (i.e., first and second absorbent bodies enclosed together between bonded surface side and back side sheets) are not recited in the rejected claim(s). Independent claim 1 requires an absorbent body being enclosed in the water permeable surface side and the water permeable or water impermeable back side, which are bonded together; and additionally includes a first absorbent body and second absorbent body. It does not require first and second absorbent bodies enclosed together between bonded surface side and back side sheets. Although the claims are interpreted in light of the specification, limitations from the specification are not read into the claims. See *In re Van Geuns*, 988 F.2d 1181, 26 USPQ2d 1057 (Fed. Cir. 1993).

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

2. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

Claims 1-4 and 9-13 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Johnson USPN 4595392.

As to claims 1, 2, and 11, Johnson discloses an interlabial pad having a water-permeable surface side sheet 7, an absorbent body 6, and a back side sheet 8. The interlabial pad comprises a flat area 10, a protruded area 3 in which a finger can be inserted for use (Figure 3). However, the claim does not require the absorbent bodies are separate. Therefore, as broadly as claimed Figure 2 of Johnson shows first absorbent body forming the protruded area 3 and second absorbent body forming the flat area 10.

Johnson does not specifically disclose the dimensions of the article. However, In *Gardner v. TEC Systems, Inc.*, 725 F.2d 1338, 220 USPQ 777 (Fed. Cir. 1984), *cert. denied*, 469 U.S. 830, 225 USPQ 232 (1984), the Federal Circuit held that, where the only difference between the prior art and the claims was a recitation of relative dimensions of the claimed device and a device having the claimed relative dimensions would not perform differently than the prior art device, the claimed device was not patentably distinct from the prior art device.

As to claim 3, see Figure 2

As to claim 4, see Figures 2 and 3.

As to claim 9, Johnson discloses the interlabial pad has a tacking agent 4 (Figures 2 and 3).

As to claims 10, 12, and 13, the claims are directed to an intended use of the article. The manner in which the article is used is directed to an intended use of the article. Intended use must result in a structural difference between the claimed invention and the prior art in order to patentably distinguish the claimed invention from the prior art. See *In re Casey*, 152 USPQ 235 (CCPA 1967) and *In re Otto*, 136 USPQ 458, 459 (CCPA 1963).

3. Claims 1, 2, and 6-11 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) as being anticipated by McFall USPN 6183587.

As to claims 1 and 2, McFall discloses an interlabial pad having a water-permeable surface side sheet 44, an absorbent body 22, and a back side sheet 72 (Figures 2-6). The interlabial pad comprises a second absorbent body flat area 24 and a first absorbent body protruded area 20. McFall does not specifically disclose the dimensions of the article. However, in *Gardner v. TEC Systems, Inc.*, 725 F.2d 1338, 220 USPQ 777 (Fed. Cir. 1984), *cert. denied*, 469 U.S. 830, 225 USPQ 232 (1984), the Federal Circuit held that, where the only difference between the prior art and the claims was a recitation of relative dimensions of the claimed device and a device having the

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claimed relative dimensions would not perform differently than the prior art device, the claimed device was not patentably distinct from the prior art device.

As to claim 6, the pad comprises a second protruded area 36, 38.

As to claim 7, the pad has third absorbent body in the second protruded area (Figure 2).

Applicant admits the cylindrical portion of the present invention may be formed only when a finger is inserted therein (specification page 4, second paragraph). Therefore, the manner in which the cylindrical portion is formed is directed to an intended use of the article. Intended use must result in a structural difference between the claimed invention and the prior art in order to patentably distinguish the claimed invention from the prior art. See *In re Casey*, 152 USPQ 235 (CCPA 1967) and *In re Otto*, 136 USPQ 458, 459 (CCPA 1963).

As to claim 8, McFall teaches orienting the absorbent material in the transverse direction to promote wicking in that direction (col. 19, lines 6-15).

As to claim 9, McFall discloses the an embodiment where the wearer inserts her hand in the absorbent, which has an another tub of absorbent on the base sheet 24. In which case, the surface sheet would be outside an inside the cylindrical portion.

As to claims 10 and 11, the claims are directed to an intended use of the article. see the discussion of claim 1 with regard to intended use limitations.

6. Claims 14-16 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Johnson USPN4595392 in view of Farris et al. USPN 6131736.


Johnson does not disclose a wrapping sheet for covering and enclosing the interlabial product. Farris et al. discloses a packaging device including a wrapping sheet 40 for the benefit of storing the interlabial device until ready for use in such a manner that the user neither touches nor contaminates the surface of the absorbent in handling (Farris col. 5, lines 45-52). It would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to modify the invention of Johnson to include a packaging device for the benefits taught in Farris.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Jacqueline F. Stephens whose telephone number is (571) 272-4937. The examiner can normally be reached on Monday-Friday 9:00-5:30.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Tanya Zalukaeva can be reached on (571) 272-1115. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 703-872-9306.

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Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free).


Jacqueline F Stephens
Primary Examiner
Art Unit 3761

April 08, 2006